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Perceptual activities for preschool reading readiness

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PERCEPTUAL ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOL READING READINESS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Parents are the first educators of their children. The entire home environment of the preschool child is a parent-determined milieu. The initial educational experiences such as providing objects and materials for the child, reacting to the child's behavior, interacting, motivating, guiding, encouraging or disapproving, and speaking with the child are provided by the parents.[1] These make it possible for a child entering school at age six to have developed language, perception, and symbolic abilities so well that he can begin reading.[2]

However, the child coming from an urban, low-income, Negro family, a disadvantaged child, enters school with a background of experiences that do not prepare him to successfully achieve in school.[3] The disadvantaged preschool

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[1]Edith H. Grotberg, "Role of the Parent in Fostering Early Learning," Education, LXXXIX (September, 1968), p. 35.

[2]David H. Russell, Children's Thinking (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1956), p. 34.

[3]Kenneth R. Johnson, Unit One: The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil -- Part I (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1967), p. 13.

child is deficient in the essential area of perceptual development.[1]

Amelioration of this complex problem is a difficult task. One area among many is parent education dealing with reading readiness of the preschool child. Through this it is anticipated that the preschool child will be better prepared for formal academic challenges when he enters school.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptual factors essential to preschool reading readiness and to explore the topic of the preschool disadvantaged child. The paper also suggested simple activities for parents of preschool children which foster the growth and development of perceptual abilities.

Significance

This paper will provide the reader with an overview of the perceptual development of the disadvantaged preschool child. Although the activities presented can be utilized by all parents of preschool children, it is hoped they will be especially applicable to disadvantaged parents.

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[1]Kenneth R. Johnson, Unit Two: The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil -- Part II (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1966), p. 17.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Disadvantaged Child

During the last decade there has been a myriad of articles, books, and pamphlets published concerning the disadvantaged population of the United States. Johnson defines the culturally disadvantaged person as "anyone who cannot participate in the dominant culture" or "one who is handicapped in the task of growing up to live a competent and satisfying life in American Society."[1] Cultural deprivation should not be equated with one race.[2] It is characteristic mainly of the following:

1. Negroes from the rural South who have migrated recently to the Northern industrial cities.
2. Whites from the rural South and the Southern mountains who have migrated recently to the Northern industrial cities.
3. Mexicans with a rural background who have migrated into the West and Middle West.
4. Puerto Ricans who have migrated to a few Northern industrial cities.
5. European immigrants with a rural background from East and Southern Europe.

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[1]Kenneth R. Johnson, Unit One: The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil -- Part I (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1967), p. 9.

[2]Benjamin S. Bloom, and others, Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 5.

"Altogether, these groups make up about 15 per cent of the United States Population. Since they tend to have large families, their children make up as much as 20 per cent of the child population."[1]

Johnson indicates six factors which contribute to making a child disadvantaged.

1. Lack of certain kinds of experiences.
2. Inability to speak standard English.
3. Color of skin.
4. Origins of ancestors.
5. Geographical location.
6. Economic impoverishment.[2]

Keller, in an early study of forty-six first and fifth graders living and attending public school in the poorer section of New York City, found that:

1. lack of family meals
2. poor self-concept
3. large families
4. persistent influence of T.V. and
5. little sustained contact with adults were factors

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[1]Robert J. Havighurst, "Who are the Socially Disadvantaged," in The Disadvantaged Learner: Knowing, Understanding, Educating, ed. by Staten W. Webster (San Francisco: Chandler, 1966), p. 27.

[2]Johnson, The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil, p. 9.

contributing negatively to the growth of the urban slum child.[1]

The disadvantaged child's academic preparation as compared with other children whose parents give them average advantages lacks the following:

1. A family environment which sets an example of reading; provides a variety of toys and play materials with colors, sizes and objects that challenge his ingenuity with his hands and mind.
2. A family conversational experience which answers his questions and encourages him to ask questions; extends his vocabulary with new words and with adjectives and adverbs; give him a right and a need to stand up for and to explain his point of view on the world.[2]

Research seems to point out that the middle-class child does have an advantage over the lower-class child. John's study indicates the advantage of the middle-class child in tasks requiring precise and abstract language. Abstract and integrative language tends to be hampered by the living conditions in the homes of lower-class children. Also feedback in the deprived environment is inadequate to encourage learning to categorize and to build a large vocabulary.[3]

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[1]Susanne Keller, "The Social World of the Urban Slum Child: Some Early Findings," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXIII (October, 1963), pp. 826-828.

[2]Robert J. Havighurst, "Introduction: The Elementary School and the Disadvantaged Pupil," in Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil, ed. by John M. Beck and Richard W. Saxe (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1967), p. viii.

[3]Vera P. John, "The Intellectual Development of Slum Children: Some Preliminary Findings," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXIII (October, 1963), pp. 821-822.

In a study of 543 urban public school children in the first and fifth grades belonging to three social groups, Deutsch and Brown found that "the conclusion is inescapable that the Negro group is a socially deprived one, and whatever other measures and functions are sensitive to social effects will also reflect this deprivation."[1]

Ausubel poignantly states the plight of the disadvantaged learner.

> The child who has an existing deficity in growth incurred from the past deprivations is less able to profit developmentally from new and more advanced levels of environmental stimulation. Thus, irrespective of the adequacy of all other factors - both internal and external - his deficit tends to increase cumulatively and to lead to permanent retardation.[2]

Speaking of children's milieu, Ausubel says,

> The more variable the environment to which children are exposed, the higher is the resulting level of effective stimulation. Characteristic of the culturally deprived environment, however, is a restricted range and a less adequate and systematic ordering of stimulated sequences.[3]

Johnson reemphasises this notion in regard to reading. The reason many culturally disadvantaged pupils are poor readers is that they lack the prerequisites to become good readers. "They aren't ready when they start school, and

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[1]Martin Deutsch and Bert Brown, "Social Influences in Negro-White Intelligence Differences," Journal of Social Issues, XX (April, 1964), p. 34.

[2]David P. Ausubel, "How reversible are the Cognitive and Motivational Effects of Cultural Deprivation? Implications of Teaching the Culturally Deprived Child," in Education of the Disadvantaged, ed. by H. Harry Passow, Miriam Goldberry, and Abraham J. Tannenbaum (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), p. 309.

[3]Ibid., p. 311.

most aren't ready after they start school, and most aren't ready any time during their school careers."[1]

There are several compensatory programs which attempt to counterbalance the academic deficit of urban, slum children. Some of them are:

1. Special classes
2. Summer School
3. Guidance
4. In-Service Education of Teachers
5. Early Admissions
6. Special Training for Teachers
7. Home Visits and
8. Other Compensatory Education[2]

Preschool education is one type of Early Admissions. If the child is not prepared adequately in the home to meet the academic challenges of school, then perhaps formal preschool experience would compensate for this lack. A study completed with a limited population of thirteen disadvantaged preschoolers and fifteen preschoolers in the control has some pertinent conclusions. By the end of one year the experimental group had a 12.7 I.Q. gain and the control group without preschool experience had gained 7.2 I.Q. points. The difference between gains of the two groups was statistically significant. At the end of kindergarten and again at the end of first grade, the difference in group mean scores

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[1]Kenneth R. Johnson, Unit Eight: Improving the Reading and Writing Skills of the Culturally Disadvantaged (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1968), p. 1.

[2]William E. Gorman, "Programs for the Culturally Disadvantaged," in Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil, ed. by John M. Beck and Richard W. Saxe (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1967), p. 36.

declined in statistical significance. By the end of second grade, a trend was complete and the pilot group was almost identical in measured intelligence to the control group.[1] This study seems to indicate little permanent modification by preschool experience.

Presuming preschool compensatory education does adequately prepare the preschool disadvantaged child to meet the academic challenges of school, it is still not sufficient as "only one-third of our nation's two million children aged three to five from poor families are now enrolled in preschool training."[2]

Parental involvement in any program is desirable but especially in preschool education if it is to be successful. Egland's survey of sixteen Head Start programs judged most of them to weak or lacking in their programs for parents. He states:

> Preschool training, education, cultural advantages and opportunities must be provided before a child is four or five years of age. If Head Start goals are to be met, the fulfillment of children's physical, psychological, cultural, and social needs should be started at birth. Head Start goals should work to prevent cultural deprivation as well as to correct it. If so, our programs must include parents and the home.[3]

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[1] Jane Schwertfeger and David P. Weikart, "Nature of Preschool Benefits; Ypsilanti Study," Michigan Education Journal, LXIV (March, 1967), pp. 18-19.

[2] Wilbur Cohen, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, speaking at Georgetown University, August 31, 1968. Reported in Phi Delta Kappan (March, 1969), p. 385.

[3] George O. Egland, "Parents in Head Start Programs," Young Children, XXI (May, 1966), p. 293.

Babitz warns those concerned with Head Start and other compensatory programs not to forget that children must be motivated by their parents if they are to explore their intellectual frontiers.[1] Parental involvement is crucial to the long-range affect of any preschool compensatory program. Yet this area is ignored by most educational planners. Out of forty-three specific preschool programs carried out in eighteen states in 1965, only eleven mentioned parental involvement as a stated goal.[2]

The question to be answered is "How can the academic needs of the disadvantaged child be met?" Gordon poses two solutions:

1. By-pass the parent and use the school as educator

2. Involve parents; teach them how to teach their children; how to strengthen the family.[3]

The school as educator has been alluded to in the preceding section. The parent as educative agent will be further discussed and developed in the following.

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[1]Milton Babitz, "Parents in Early Childhood Education," California Education, III (February, 1966), p. 3.

[2]Robert D. Hess, Inventory of Compensatory Education Projects 1965. (Chicago: Urban Child Center, University of Chicago), 1965.

[3]Ira J. Gordon, "Developing Parent Power," in Language Development Experiences for Young Children (Bethesda, Maryland: NCR/ERIC Micro Form, Ed 019 125), p. 10.

Parent as Educative Agent

What does it take for a child to do well in school? Factors which concern taxpayers, administrators, and researchers include good curriculum, good teachers, good physical plant and up-to-date textbooks. Another vital factor is the child himself. His intelligence, needs, physical health, and level of maturity must all be considered. The home and the street are two other important factors which are usually overlooked.

The ecological factors of the home are quality of housing, level of income, composition of the family, social class, and ethnic background. The behavior of the parents also influences the learning of the child.

Children are more likely to do well in school if they come from homes which:

1. have planned cultural activities.
2. have taken advantage of the variety of community resources available.
3. provide children with academic guidance.
4. make reading materials available.
5. include the use of many abstractions and reasoning types of sentences in family language.

The mother in the home should be emotionally secure, have a good deal of self-esteem, trust the school, devote time to the child, have a set of organized work habits, and

believe that she has some control over her own life.[1]

The above description of a mother in the home does not generally fit the urban, slum mother.

Gordon's Parent Education Program in North-central Florida attempted to make a long-term change in child performance by modifying the home as a learning setting.[2] Women from disadvantaged neighborhoods were used to teach indigent mothers of infants and young children how to stimulate their children's development. They were assigned to mothers of three-month-old babies and visited these homes once a week until the child was two years old.[3] The results of this project have not been reported as it is still in progress. Thus far, however, this type of program seems to enhance the development of infants whose mothers were reached in their homes.[4]

The federally funded Nat King Cole Child-Parent Education Center in Chicago, Illinois is another project which involved parents of three-to-six-year-olds in the child's early educational and cultural growth. It was recognized that Head Start was not sufficient to alleviate the

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[1]Ira J. Gordon, "Self Help Approach: Parents as Teachers," Compact, III (December, 1969), pp. 32-33.

[2]Ibid., p. 33.

[3]Ira J. Gordon, "Stimulation Via Parent Education," Children, XVI (March, 1969), p. 57.

[4]Gordon, "Self Help Approach," pp. 58-59.

learning problems of the disadvantaged. That is why some children spend up to five years in the center. The success of this project is reported from city-wide administration of the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test. Of 105 children in all four centers, 68.5 per cent tested average or better as compared to 53.4 per cent of the city average.[1]

Do important changes in adult behavior occur as a result of parent education? A study carried out with ninety middle class, midwestern parents of fourth grade children indicate changes are produced. The parents were divided into three subgroups of control, experimental, and placebo. Each group was given eight study-discussion meetings. The self-concept of the children in the experimental group was higher than those in the other two groups.[2] Although the population involved in this study was not disadvantaged, the results, nevertheless, indicate that an effective parent education program should bring about positive changes in children of the parents who participate.

Modification of children's mental development through home involvement is also feasible. A program of home tutoring was begun in September, 1965 in Washington, D.C. by the

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[1]Wayne K. Hoffman, "Parents Help Preschoolers Get Their Start in Chicago; Nat King Cole Child-Parent Education Center," Nation's Schools, LXXXIII (April, 1969), pp. 81-82.

[2]Mary P. Endres and Merry J. Evans, "Some Effects of Parent Education on Parents and Their Children," Adult Education, XVIII (Winter, 1968), pp. 101-111.

National Institute of Mental Health to stimulate the intellectual development of very young children of lower socio-economic status. The population consisted of thirty-one Negro male children under two years of age with a control group of thirty-three children of the same age. The tutors were college graduates who had some experience with young children. They were given a brief training period. The procedure consisted of two tutors alternating weekly visits for each child in the experiment for an hour a day, five days a week, beginning when the child reached fifteen months and continuing through thirty-six months of age.[1]

> The results suggest that the children's experience in their first fifteen months might have adversely influenced their early mental development, but that the home tutoring programs stimulated a more rapid rate of mental development later. However, a year after the intensive home tutoring was terminated the intelligence scores of the children had dropped significantly, indicating that young children need not only early but also continuing stimulation for optimal intellectual growth.[2]

For optimum intellectual growth it seems imperative that the child receives mental stimulation from the date of birth. The disadvantaged home contains inhibiting factors which make it difficult for children to receive the necessary quality and quantity of attention.

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[1] Earl S. Schaefer, "A Home Tutoring Program," Children, XVI (March, 1969), p. 59.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

One of the inhibiting factors is the maternal attitudes prevalent in a poverty area. A study by North and Buchanan concerning this factor involved eighty-three parents of four-year-old and five-year-old nursery and kindergarten Negro children of an extremely impoverished area. The parents were tested with the Parental Attitude Research Instrument and the children were administered the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability. The results revealed the Negro mother to be severely authoritarian. "Her attitudes of strictness and her expression of the necessity for controlling her children are actually her efforts to aver and convince herself and others of her successful motherhood."[1]

Not only are her attitudes of child rearing restrictive but also the language styles she employs. Olim and others found that:

> The mother who used inhibitory procedures tends to cut off thought and to discourage the weighing of alternatives or the emergence of the ability to compare and select on the basis of arguments inherent in the situation; she tends to make the child aware of the sanctions of an external system.[2]

The teaching styles of fifty-five mothers from the middle class, upper-lower class, and lower-lower class were examined in an experiment. The mother was asked to teach

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[1]George E. North and O. Lee Buchanan, "Maternal Attitudes in a Poverty Area," Journal of Negro Education, XXXVII (Fall, 1968), pp. 418-425.

[2]Ellis G. Olim and others, "Role of Mother's Language Styles in Mediating Their Preschool Children's Cognitive Development," The School Review, (Winter, 1967), p. 416.

her kindergarten child how to put a puzzle together. The mother-child interaction was taped and later transcribed. The mother's teaching was then rated by criteria developed by Hess and his associates. In both middle class and upper-lower class the maternal teaching styles were significantly related to the child's reading readiness. In the lower-lower class, maternal teaching styles were not found to be significantly related to reading readiness.[1] This lower-lower class environment "produces a child who related to authority rather than to reason, who may be compliant but not reflective, and who expects the consequences of an act to be immediate."[2]

The disadvantaged mother's deficiency in attitude, language style, and method of teaching does seem to have a marked effect on the mental development of her child. The compensatory focus seems to be widening to include not only the child but also the mother who has not been successful as a learner herself. Swift's article pointedly comments on this.

> While the child receives more and more assistance outside of the home, the mother has nowhere to learn the skills which will allow her the opportunity to participate in the education of her child. In this area, as in too many aspects of her life, the poverty mother feels and often is powerless to affect positively her

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[1]Wilma H. Miller, "When Mothers Teach Their Children," Elementary School Journal, LXX (October, 1969), pp. 38-42.

[2]Virginia Shipman and Robert Hess, "Early Experiences in the Socialization of Cognitive Modes in Children: A Study of Urban Negro Families," Childhood Education, XLIII (December, 1966), p. 247.

life or the lives of her children. Often the mother who realizes that she lacks the skills necessary to help her child to learn and to achieve success gains the feeling that she is unnecessary. Ironically as her child gains more outside assistance, the mother feels that she has less of an impact upon his development and adds one more frustration to increase her sense of worthlessness and alienation.[1]

As the school assumes more responsibility for the child, it becomes involved in developing in the child a much wider range of significant behavior. The school and teacher overshadow the home and mother. "A program that places the mother in a subordinate and independent position seems likely to encourage either dependence on and compliance with school or frustration and rebellion."[2]

As has been discussed, one or two years of preschool experience is not sufficient to insure adequate academic achievement of disadvantaged children in school. It seems apparent that we must move toward strategies for changing the family milieu. A change in family life could affect a child not just during his preschool years, but from birth through his entire school career.[3]

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[1]Marshall S. Swift, "Training Poverty Mothers in Communication," Reading Teacher, XXIII (January, 1970), p. 360.

[2]Robert D. Hess, "Parental Behavior and Children's School Achievement: Implications for Head Start," in Critical Issues in Research Related to Disadvantaged Children, ed. by Edith Grotberg (Bethesda, Maryland: NCR/ERIC Micro Form, Ed 034 088, 1969), pp. 45-46.

[3]Daniel R. Scheinfeld, "On Developing Developmental Families," in Critical Issues in Research Related to Disadvantaged Children, proceedings of six Head Start research seminars, Fifth Seminar: Intervention in Family Life (Bethesda, Maryland: NCR/ERIC Micro Form, Ed 034 088, 1969), p. 1.

The questions to be answered are: In what specific area is the disadvantaged child most deficient? What areas of development are fundamental to academic achievement?

Biber gives five preschool experiences necessary for academic learning.

1. Exploring the physical world
2. Perceptual discrimination
3. Action responses: building, coloring, drawing
4. Reproducing and symbolizing experiences: painting, modeling with clay, music
5. Language and concepts[1]

Crow and others indicate the most deficient area of development in the disadvnataged child is in cognitive development. The child will probably arrive at school with a deficient in making perceptual discriminations among objects and may even formulate distorted ideas or concepts.[2]

Perceptual development is stimulated by environments which are rich in adult-child relationships, and contain objects for manipulation. At the beginning of first grade there is a difference between the deprived and advantaged child in the amount and variation of experience which develops perceptual discrimination.[3]

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[1]Barbara Biber, "Educational Needs of Young Deprived Children," Childhood Education, XLIV (September, 1967), pp. 30-36.

[2]Lester D. Crow, Walter I. Murray, and Hugh H. Smythe, Educating the Culturally Disadvantaged Child (New York: David McKay Company, 1966), p. 63.

[3]Bloom, Compensatory Education, p. 13.

Perceptual Development

Perceptual development is the foundation upon which other cognitive abilities build. Since the disadvantaged child is deficient in this area, the topic will be explored fully.

> A percept is what is known of an object, a quality or a relationship as a result of sensory experience. It is awareness of present data rather than a memory or image of things past. It is not a separate object, nor even one of a succession of objects like beads on a string. Rather it is a part of ever-changing mental activity linked to preceding sensation and subsequent thinking processes. It does not exist in isolation but tends to be reinforced by other related sensations and perceptions.[1]

Perceptual development in the preschool child is important for these reasons:

1. Perception is the process by which most of the raw materials of thinking become available for use.
2. Perceptions are among the child's earliest learnings.
3. Perceptual learning merges into concept formation.
4. Perception is essential to learning by imitation.[2]

Percepts are acquired through the sensory modalities of smelling, tasting, touching, speaking, seeing, hearing, and movement.[3] The learned perceptual abilities are the skill

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[1] David H. Russell, Children's Thinking (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1956), p. 66.

[2] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[3] G. N. Getman, "What Makes Children Tick - A Review of How Children Develop Learning Readiness," lecture given at Nicolet High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 9, 1970.

to classify objects, to discriminate between shapes and forms, to recognize and distinguish color, to explore spatially the surroundings, and to discover by movement the relationship between the child and the environment.[1]

Vernon has succinctly described the perceptual process in both the child and adult. The following section of this chapter draws chiefly from Vernon's description of the perceptual process in the preschool child.

Classification

As speech and language develop, the process of learning to classify objects according to their use and appearance is greatly facilitated.[2] The child begins to associate the name with the object. The name then becomes a part of his experience with that object. Soon the child will realize that everything has a name and will try to name everything he notices. When an unfamiliar object appears he may give it a name of something similar. Eventually he realizes that some names belong to classes of objects with similar characteristics of appearance and use.

The child, however, does not always observe the essential and differentiating qualities of the objects he

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[1]Magdalen D. Vernon, The Psychology of Perception, A Pelican Book, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

perceives and he may consequently classify them incorrectly by means of superficial or irrelevant characteristics and give them the wrong name.[1] For example, he may name anything round as "ball" or anything to be avoided "hot".

> Thus the most important and fundamental type of classification is probably that which is made in terms of the behavior which the child finds by experience is appropriate in response to his perceptions. The function of perception is primarily to enable him to react effectively.[2]

Before a child can identify objects in his environment, he must be able to abstract the qualities which are essential and to learn to recognize them even in a different spatial position. Thus, before a child can perceive and identify objects he must be able to classify the varied shapes and sizes a single object may appear to have when it is viewed in different surroundings, from different aspects, and at different distances.[3]

The role of the parent in providing the child with various experiences with objects is indispensable. The parent must name and point out similar and differing qualities of objects for the child.

Perception of Shape

The ability to discriminate between shapes of objects and forms is a prerequisite to initial reading readiness.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[2] Ibid., p. 27.

[3] Ibid., p. 29.

The child at six months can demonstrate the ability to perceive shapes accurately and in detail by discriminating between solid blocks with circular, square, and triangular faces.[1] Perception at six months of age seems to be extremely limited, however, as the child needs prolonged experience to learn to choose between one shape and another.

Not until four years of age is the preschool child able to match one shape from a number of shapes, such as diamond, triangle, and quadrilaterals. It is also probable that the child learns more easily the shapes of familiar objects which are useful or interesting to him.[2]

Since the child becomes aware of differing shapes through experience, it is essential that the parent provide the child with objects of various shapes and sizes. The preschooler should not only see different forms in the home, but also be able to hold and tactically experience the form.

Perception of Color

Just as adults respond more readily to colorful objects, wrappings, and clothing than to dull ones, so does the young child. At six months of age the child prefers colored objects to grey objects. Even though the child

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[1] Ibid., p. 86.

[2] Ibid., p. 87.

prefers colorful objects and responds to them with emotional excitement, it is not until he is older that he thinks about colors and observes them at all accurately.[1]

Identification of colors is facilitated by the parents' referral to them by name. Most colors have multiple tints and shades such as the color blue. Learning that the range between light blue and dark blue is "blue" requires repetition and patience on the part of the parent.

Perception of Space

A child's perception of depth and distance appears to be spontaneous and unlearned. As the infant of six months learns to coordinate the movement of both eyes and focus them on near objects, the perception of space begins.[2]

Experience is essential for accurate estimation of distance from binocular cues. A child even during the first few months will reach out and try to grasp objects which are near to him but will not attempt to reach for those which are at a distance.[3]

As the child matures he is able to utilize cues which assist in determining distance of objects. Cues such as a broken outline of a building or object indicate that the

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[1] Ibid., p. 99.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

[3] Ibid., p. 129.

building or object is behind something. Also, decrease in the size of a known object reveals that object to be farther away. Particles of dust in the atmosphere make distant objects hazy as compared to those which are near. Shadows also aid in determining background from foreground.[1]

The functioning of the eye in space perception is complex and includes:

1. The capacity for perceiving the position of objects in space.

2. The orientation of objects in space.

3. The ability to note an object's shape and size.[2]

> The complexity of the basis of space perception and the fact that so much of it must be learned through experience and interpretation suggest that parent and teacher should not expect too much of the child's perception of space.[3]

Piaget also showed that children under the age of eight may have little awareness of the spatial relations of objects which they are not immediately involved.[4]

Perception of Movement

Perception of movement is brought about by a change of position of objects in relation to their background.[5]

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[1] Russell, Children's Thinking, p. 80.

[2] Ibid..

[3] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[4] Vernon, Perception, p. 136.

[5] Ibid., p. 142.

Perception of moving objects begins in the new born infant. The child will respond to an object dangled in front of him and follow the object with his eyes.

Knowledge and judgment of movement is essential to the safety and preservation of life of the preschool child. He must learn the danger of moving vehicles and other powered machinery.

When a child moves something he becomes aware that he can cause movement. Initially, his act will be accidental; then he will begin to produce movement of objects intentionally. These events must be repeated again and again in different forms before the child learns the general principle that he can cause objects to move.[1]

Situations which allow the child to explore movement are easily produced by the parent. Any home has various harmless objects which can be utilized by the child and parent in developing perception of movement.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature under the topics of The Disadvantaged Child, Parent as Educative Agent, and Perceptual Development.

The major findings are that the disadvantaged child lacks specific readiness abilities which do not permit him

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[1] Ibid., pp. 151-152.

to obtain academic success in school. Programs have been established to compensate for these lacunae. It has been suggested by numerous researchers that the home and parent must be involved in any compensatory educative program before it will be successful. The readiness area most responsive to parental involvement is perceptual development.

CHAPTER III

PERCEPTUAL ACTIVITIES

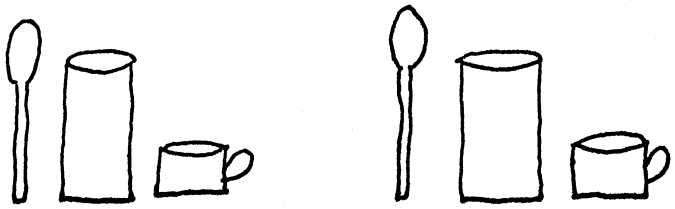
Introduction

This chapter will present many simple activities which aid in developing perceptual abilities in the preschool child. The activities will utilize objects found in the home. They will be kept extremely simple in directives and will be accompanied with illustrations whenever possible. It is anticipated that disadvantaged parents will find the activities applicable to their particular environment.

Classification

Classification involves the ability to observe and identify like qualities in objects. A child's ability to classify things in his environment is greatly supplemented by the development of language. Because of this, the first activities will demand only visual classification. However, verbal interaction between parent and child is essential if the child is to acquire language sufficient to discern orally between differing qualities, uses, and shapes of objects.

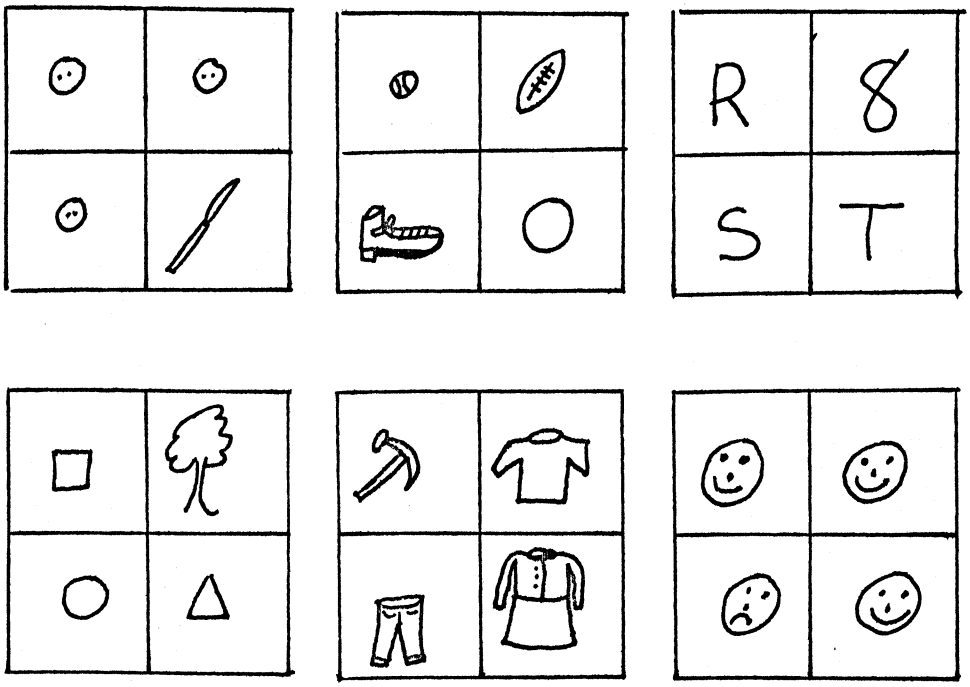
1. Have the child match one object or picture to another just like it.



As the child matches the objects that look alike, the parent should name them and tell the child what they are used for. If the child is unable to match them, the parent should show the child how they are alike.

2. After the child has learned the names of some objects, the parent should tell the child to get or point to certain objects.
"Find two things we eat with."
"Point to the animal in your book."
"Point to your clothes. What clothes do you have on?"

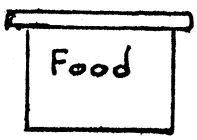
3. From four objects have the child pick out the one that does not belong. Objects or pictures cut from magazines may be used.



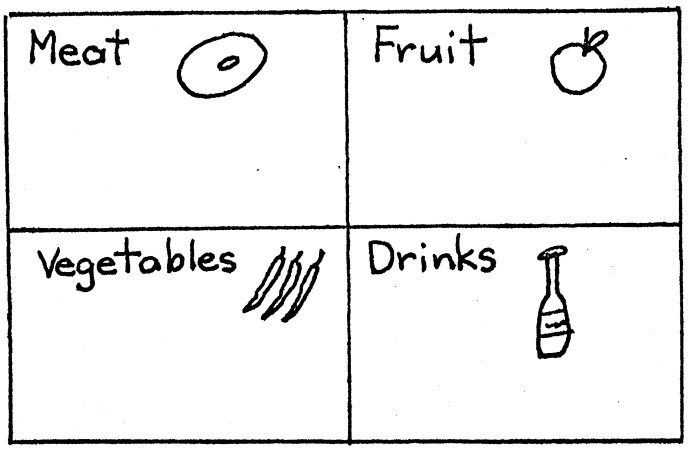
4. After the child can find the one that is different, the parent should have the child tell why it is different. If the answer is wrong or incomplete, praise the child for trying and then explain the differences.

5. Food is probably the most familiar category to a child. The parent should ask the child to name the food he is eating at meal time.

6. Have the child cut or tear pictures from the newspaper or magazine which show food. The child can save these in a marked box.



7. As the collection of pictures grows, they can be sorted to include meat, things we drink, vegetables, and fruits. If possible, a large sheet of paper or newspaper should be labeled to help the child in sorting. A key picture glued to each section will be of further help.



8. The parent or older sibling can play a game using the food chart.

Guess

Parent: I'm thinking of a fruit that is round and red.
Child: Apple.

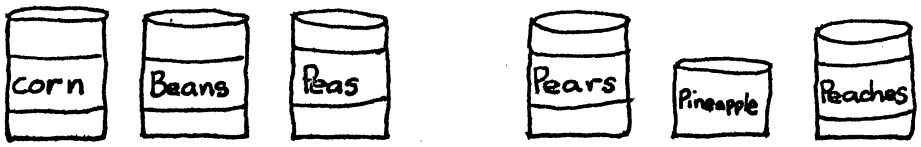
Parent: I'm thinking of a meat you eat in the morning.
Child: Bacon or ham.

Child and parent can alternate giving clues to one another. The person with the correct answer gets to keep the picture of that particular food. The person with the most pictures at the end of the game is the winner.

9. Shopping is another opportunity for parent and child to explore the category of food. The parent should name the different foods in the store. Call the child's attention to the many kinds of breads available and the various ways of packaging. For example: frozen corn, fresh corn, and canned corn.

10. A store has classified different foods for the parent to take advantage of. The parent should examine and talk about the different kinds of meat, fruit, and vegetables. The child should be allowed to pick out his favorite foods.

11. Empty or full vegetable and fruit cans with their labels make excellent objects to classify when the child is home.



12. There are many different kinds of shoes that are worn for specific occasions. A visit to the shoe store is an excellent opportunity for a parent to talk about the different kinds of shoes that are worn. The parent can make a game asking the child how many he can think of. For example: tennis shoes, rubbers, boots, bedroom slippers, ladies heel shoes, sandals, etc.

13. Dishes can also be classified. When the child is eating the parent should ask him to point to and name the dishes on the table. These can include a plate, cup, saucer, glass, and bowl.

14. A parent should discuss and point out pieces of furniture to the child. This game can be played.

Touch

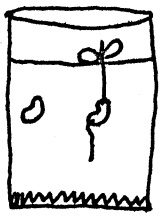
The child should follow the parent around the house. The parent will touch a piece of furniture and say its name. The child will do the same thing repeating what the parent has said. For example:
"This is a chair."
"This is a table."
"This is a T.V."
"This is a bed."

15. A child is usually curious and eager to learn the names of animals. An animal picture book from the library or one bought at the supermarket is an excellent source for learning to distinguish between animals and to learn their names. A trip to the zoo is also another good opportunity for the child to experience animals.

16. Play this game with the child. The parent should name three things one of which is not an animal. The child should tell which is not an animal and why.
"Cat, dog, car."
"Tiger, spoon, cow."
"Horse, house, fish."
"Book, elephant, mouse."
"Deer, monkey, ship."

17. A child can easily watch a plant of his own to grow. The parent should line a glass with a napkin or paper towel. Fill the glass with a quarter inch of water making sure the water touches the paper napkin. Push two or three dried pinto beans between the paper and the glass. Keep the paper and beans wet by adding a small

amount of water to the bottom of the glass. The paper acts as a wick to keep the beans moist. In a few days the beans will begin to grow. When the plants have several leaves, gently place the roots in soil. The child can learn how to water his plant and to keep it in the sun.



18. Magazines abound with pictures of flowers, trees, grass, and different plants. The child with the help of the parent can start a collection of things that grow. The pictures can be kept in a labeled shoe box or other labeled container.

19. Almost every large city has parks and public botanical gardens where plants are cultivated and displayed. By visiting these places, a parent can easily introduce the child to the vast world of plant life.

20. Activity number sixteen can also be played by naming plants. The child must pick out the one that does not belong and tell why it does not.
"Lamp, tree, grass."
"Cactus, horse, flower."
"Dandelion, street, rose."

21. As the parent or older sibling dresses the preschool child, the clothes he is putting on should be named for the child.

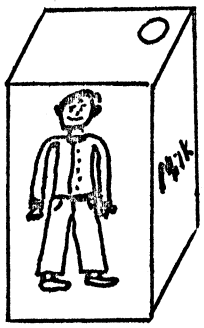
22. The child by the age of three should be able to bring certain pieces of clothing to the parent. For example the parent can say:
"Bring me your shirt and pants."
"Put on your new dress."
"Wear your tennis shoes today."

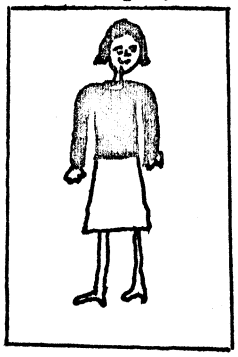
23. After the child knows the names of his clothes, the parent can be more explicit in directions.
"Bring me your red shirt and blue pants."
"Put on your yellow and white dress."
"Wear your white tennis shoes today."

24. Perceptual activities for classification of shapes are developed in the next section. The child should, however, be able to classify squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, cubes, balls, cones, and cylinders in the category of shapes.

25. Letter and number shapes should also be classified as such. Activities for their development are also presented in the following section.

26. A child needs the security of a family and will readily classify the people he lives with as members. A child should be provided with play people so he can reinact family activity and more firmly establish his position as a member. Magazines and catalogs are excellent sources for pictures of people. These can be cut out and glued or taped on cardboard or empty quart milk containers.





27. Words which describe the size, shape, or use of objects are important for the child to learn. A child's vocabulary of synonyms or words that mean the same is limited but can be developed. Most children around the age of four years are fascinated with large or new words. A parent should capitalize on this interest by providing the child with new words. For example:
"How many ways can you say big?" large, huge, gigantic
"Think of another word for little." small, tiny, wee
"What kind of a day is it?" sunny, bright, hot

Perception of Shape

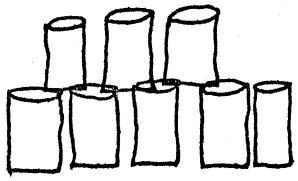
The preschool child should be supplied with a great number of objects of various sizes and shapes. These may include empty cereal boxes, empty or filled cans, egg cartons, milk cartons, pieces of material, plastic drinking glasses, spoons, pieces of smooth wood scrap, cut shapes of cardboard, cooking pan covers, empty tissue paper rolls, wrapping paper rolls, round and square baking tin pans, muffin pans, jar lids, coffee cans, and any other household object that is unbreakable and safe for a child to handle.

Initially, the child should experience differences in shape and size by handling various objects. Sorting shapes and naming them will be the final tasks. Since the child will more readily be able to recognize and name objects he is familiar with, it is important to introduce forms of letters and numbers in conjunction with other shapes.

Round

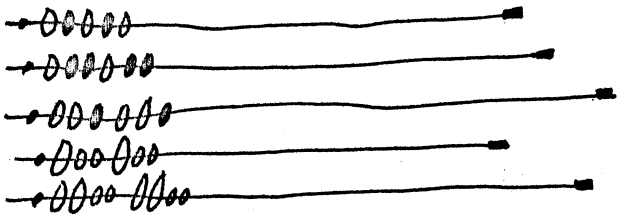
1. The parent should supply the child with empty soup or vegetable cans that are clean and free from any sharp edge. The wrappings should be left on if possible as they are colorful and will be used for a later activity. Show the child how he can roll the cans.

2. The parent should show the child the cans will stack and can be used to build things.



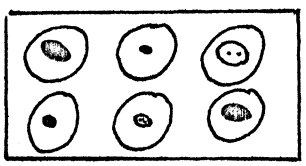
3. The child can string discarded buttons on a string using a blunt needle or old shoe string knotted at one end.

4. The child can string buttons in a pattern which has been started by the parent.

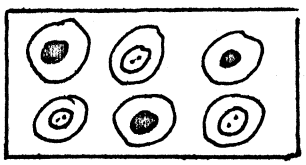


5. The child can sort buttons in an empty egg carton or muffin pan.

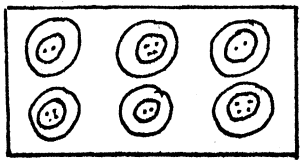
By size:



By color:

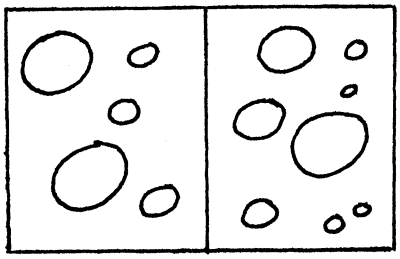


By the number of holes:

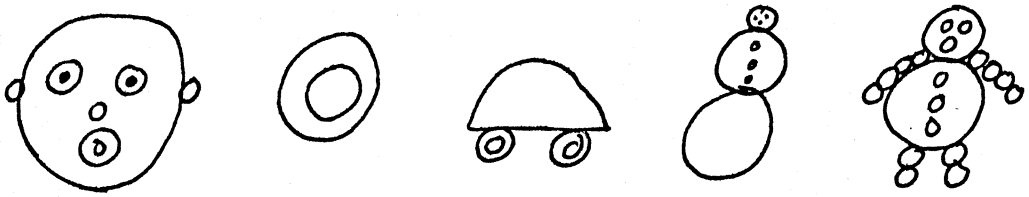


6. The child can encircle many different objects in an embroidery hoop.

7. The child with the help of the parent can trace around coffee can lids and other size jar lids on newspaper with a crayon or pencil.

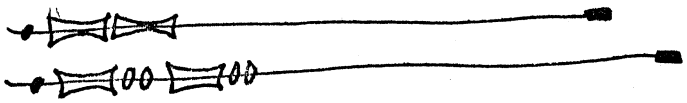


8. If the child can use a blunt scissors, the circles that were traced on the newspaper can be cut out. These can be colored and used to make different designs.

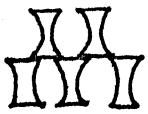


9. The parent should start collecting empty thread spools. The child can use these in many ways to help him develop the concept of "roundness".

10. The child can use string, yarn, thin rope, or shoe string to string the empty thread spools on. The parent should start a pattern for the child to follow.

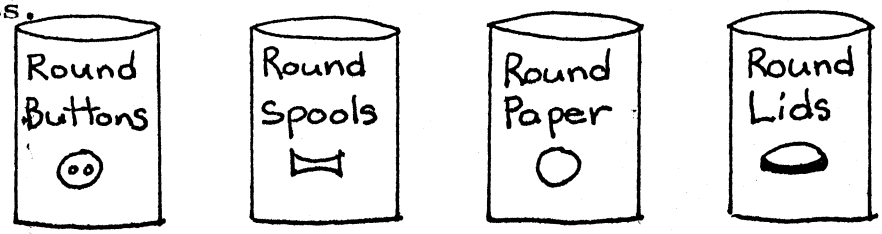


11. Show the child that they can be used to build with.



12. The parent can dip the ends of the spools in bowls of different colored food coloring. The child can then sort the spools out according to color.

13. The parent can label coffee cans to hold different round objects.



14. The parent can begin a collection of lids and covers from jars of different sizes, catsup bottles, cottage cheese containers, plastic coffee can covers, and any other round container. These should be examined to insure they are free from sharp edges or are not harmful to the child in any way.

15. The collected lids and covers can be traced, sorted to size, and used as building material.

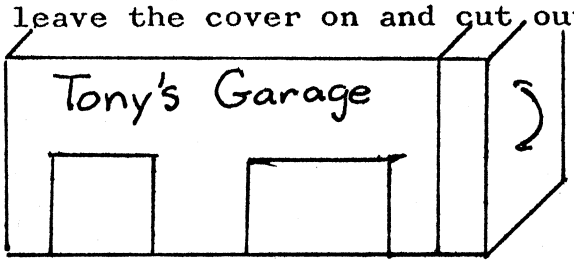
16. The parent should try as much as possible to talk with the child about the shape of the objects he is playing with. The parent could say:
"Put the round button on the string."
"Cut the round shapes."
"See, the tops of the cans are round."
"Let's make a face using the round pieces of paper."

17. "Round" should not be confined to objects in the home. When the child is with the parent in the car or walking, round objects can also be pointed out and talked about. For example:
"See the round wheel on the car."
"Find the things that are round in the car."
"How many round things can we find in the store?"

Square

1. Empty cereal boxes make excellent square objects for building. The child can build a house for himself or his playthings.

2. Large, empty laundry soap or detergent boxes also make excellent storage boxes and play things. The parent should leave the cover on and cut out openings in the side.



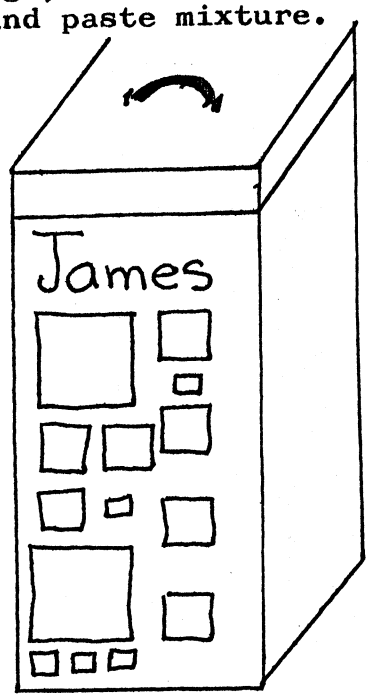
The child's name and what the box is should be put on the box with crayon or dark pen.

"James' Store" "Zenobia's House"
"Tony's Garage" "Mary's Library"

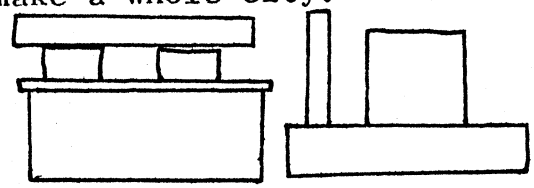
3. This large box can also be used to store objects. The child may want to decorate it with different colored

squares cut from magazines, catalogs, and newspapers. These can be glued on with flour and paste mixture.

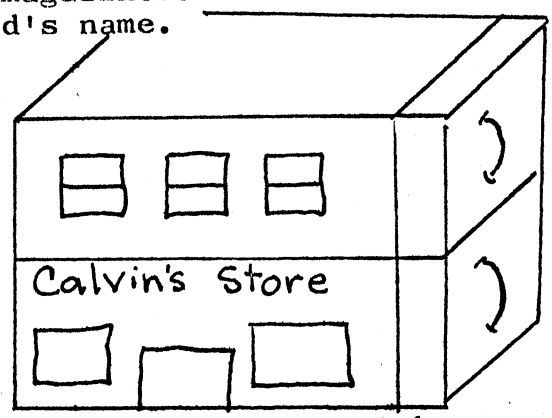
4. Shoe boxes also make good playthings. The parent should tape or tie the cover on the box so it can be used as a block for building.



5. Cleaned quart milk containers make excellent building and handling material. A combination of building materials: shoe boxes, milk containers, and cereal boxes are sufficient to make a whole city.



6. The child will find endless variety in building. He might even build a whole complex of stores and houses for imaginary play. The parent could help him construct a double-deck store with windows cut from newspapers and magazines. The store should be labeled with the child's name.



7. As every family does not have a chalkboard, it is necessary to find other materials a child can use for drawing. Newspaper or inexpensive shelving paper laid on a smooth floor or table is an excellent substitute. The parent should supply the child with a dark crayon or blunt pencil and objects to trace around color. Newspaper advertisements in black and white provide the child with his own colorbook.

8. Many things in the home are square in shape. The parent can play a game with the child to help concretize the concept of square. This game may be played.

I See

Parent: I see something square and you walk on it.
Child: Floor tile.

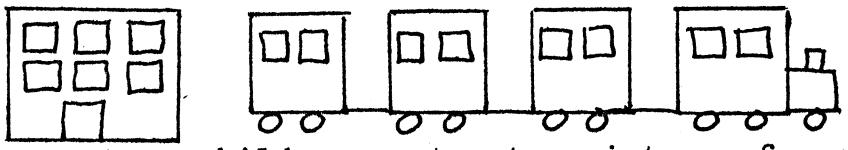
Parent: I see something square and you can look through it.
Child: Window.

Parent: I see something square and you can read it.
Child: Book, newspaper, magazine or catalog.

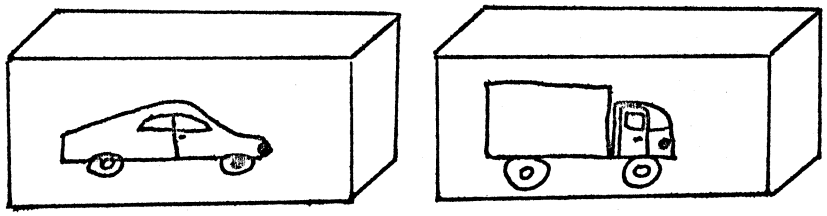
Different shapes and clues can be substituted to make the game more challenging and interesting.

9. Cookie and cake pans are also square and can be utilized as a container or object to be traced and cut out.

10. Squares of different sizes can be used to make things.

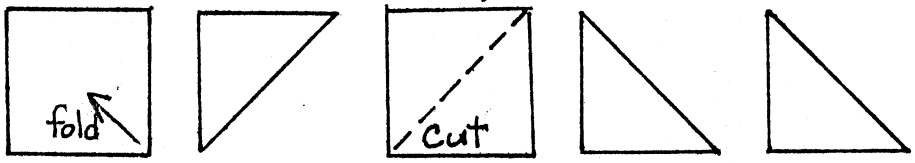


11. The parent or child can cut out a picture of a car, person, or any other object from a magazine or newspaper. This can be pasted or taped to a milk carton or cereal box. Many new toys can be made this easy way.



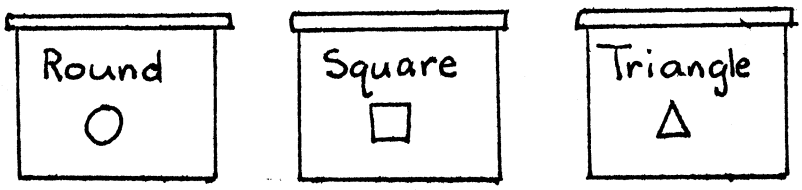
Triangle

1. The parent should show the child that if a square is cut from one corner to another, the result is two triangles.

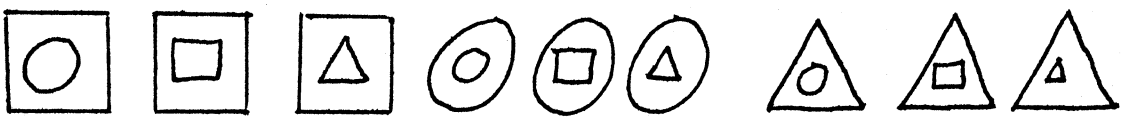


2. These cut shapes along with the circle and square can be sorted according to form. They should be kept in shoe

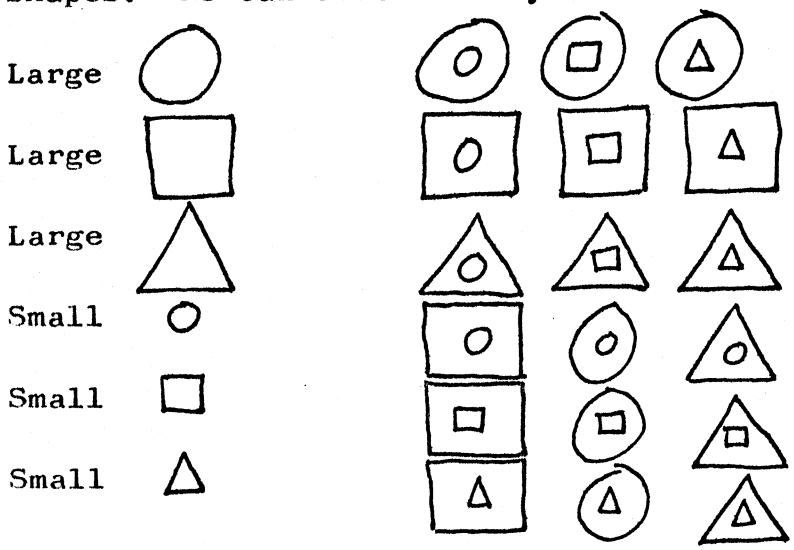
boxes or any other container. It is important that the parent label the boxes for the child. A shape glued on the box will help the child in sorting.



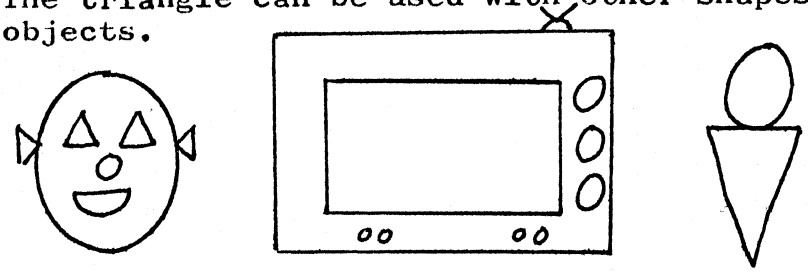
3. For finer discrimination, shapes of one kind can be glued on a shape of another and then sorted various ways.



4. A parent can show the child different ways to sort the shapes. He can sort them by:



5. The triangle can be used with other shapes to make many objects.



Alphabet and Number Forms

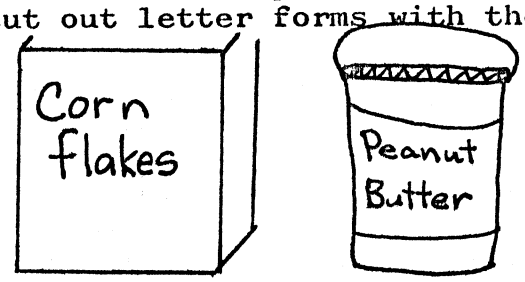
1. The parent can cut out alphabet and number forms from the cardboard of cereal boxes or any heavy paper. The forms should be about three inches high and include both the capital and small letters. Another method is to

glue the headlines from the newspaper on cardboard and then cut around the large, heavy letters.

2. As the child plays with these and handles them, he will become familiar with their shape. The parent should be aware of these forms as they appear on printed materials and point them out to the child. It is also important that the parent tell the child that letters make words and to show him examples.

3. The parent should point to the letters on cereal boxes and name them for the child. It is important that the name of the product is also read.
"C-o-r-n F-l-a-k-e-s, Corn Flakes."
"M-i-l-k, Milk."

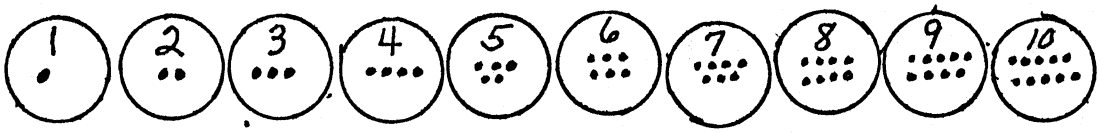
4. When the child plays with empty boxes, he can match the cut out letter forms with the name on the box.



5. The child can match his letters with a newspaper headline.

6. A child's boxes should be labeled with his name. This gives the child an opportunity to match his letter forms to his name.

7. The parent should make cards out of light cardboard which show a number and how many objects make that number. The child can match his number forms to the card and also count buttons or other small objects to equal the number of objects shown on the card.



8. While shopping or walking, a parent should point out different letter forms.
"S-t-o-p, Stop."
"M-e-a-t-s, Meats."
"S-u-n-d-a-y-S-e-r-v-i-c-e-s, Sunday Services."

9. Many opportunities must be made available for the child to match letters and numbers if he is to discriminate between them. It is essential that the parent show and tell the child the names of the forms and how they are different. Repetition and praise are the most necessary qualities for a parent to have when teaching the pre-school child.

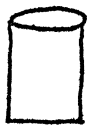
10. After the child is able to match one letter to another, the parent should begin to teach him the names of the letters.

11. The parent should ask the child to bring a certain number of objects.
"Please bring me two spoons for the table."
"You need one more square for your train."
"Bring me four of your socks."

12. Show the child that letters make up words by pointing to the labels on the cans and containers he plays with.

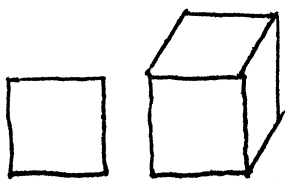
One- and two-dimensional objects have been discussed without any formal introduction to three-dimensional forms. These can be brought to the attention of the child after he has mastered the simple forms.

Cylinder

The shape  is a common sight in most households. Canned goods, cleanser, coffee, and many other items come in this three-dimensional shape. The child has been introduced to this form in the "round" activities. The parent should call these objects cylinders and show the child the difference between round and the cylinder.

Cube

Cube  has also been presented along with "square". Some boxes and wooden play blocks can be utilized to teach the child what a cube is. Again, the child should be shown the difference between a square and a cube.



Cone 

A cone is easy to teach any child because of the connotation with ice cream. Because the child is familiar with an ice cream cone, a parent can use this as the basis of comparison to other shapes.

Perception of Color

Grouping, matching, and comparing colors is essential if a child is to discern one from another and be able to name them. Primary and secondary colors will be discussed in the activities because of the subtleties in distinction of the primary and secondary mixed colors. Although one specific color will be indicated in the activities, any color may be substituted and used. The colors a child should be able to name and recognize are red, blue, yellow, orange, purple, and green.

1. A parent and child can look through a magazine or old catalog and cut out all the things that are red. These can be pasted on the cover of a shoe box. The child has a place to keep all the other pictures with that particular color. The box should be marked with the name of the color.

2. Inexpensive food coloring can be bought in any supermarket. It can be used to dye various objects such as empty thread spools, macaroni, and pieces of string. To make secondary colors, follow the directions below.

   Orange: three parts yellow and two parts red
   Purple: three parts red and one part blue
   Green: three parts yellow and one part blue

3. To dye the ends of spools or other objects, follow these directions. Start with two-thirds cup of hot water. Add food coloring to desired color plus two teaspoons of vinegar to set the color. The parent should be sure to show the child how green, purple, and orange are made. The child will enjoy making different colors himself under the guidance of the parent.

4. The parent can ask the child to name all the things he can think of that are blue.

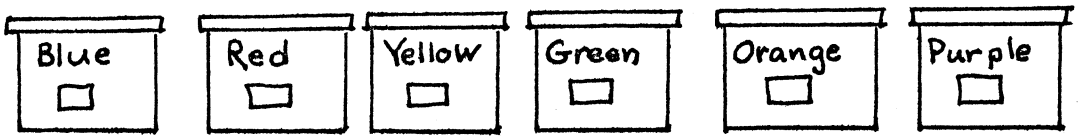
5. From a group of colors the parent should have the child find one specific color.
"Find all the noodles that are green and put them here."

6. The parent should begin sorting out colors from a group of colors and have the child finish. They can be sorted into a muffin pan or egg carton.

7. The parent can begin stringing a certain color pattern with dyed empty thread spools and have the child follow the pattern.

8. The parent can make several complete patterns which the child can copy on another shoe string.

9. After the child is able to match like colors and separate one color from many, begin teaching the names of the colors. The child can also start color boxes to keep his colors separate and in order.



10. The parent can play this game with the child. The parent names a certain color object and the child must think of one the same color.

Parent: The grass is green.
Child: The leaves are green.

Parent: The tomatoe is red.
Child: My dress is red.

Parent: A pumpkin is orange.
Child: An orange is orange.

Parent: The sky is blue.
Child: A lake is blue.

11. As a child learns to dress himself, color becomes important. A parent should direct the child to bring or put on specific colored clothing.
"Wear the brown shirt and blue pants."
"Put on your red dress."
"Find your green socks."

Perception of Space

Even though an infant responds to objects dangled in front of his eyes and not to those at a distance, more refined discrimination of space and distance develops from experience as the child matures. A parent can be a catalyst in this perceptual area by making the child aware of objects near or far. Cues to determine distance are learned and therefore can be taught to the child.

1. Words that describe distance should be used by the parent.
   "That car is <u>far</u> away."
   "The table is <u>close</u>."
   "The chair is <u>far</u>."
   "Pick up the block that is <u>near</u> you."

2. Put two objects on the floor next to the child. Ask him to point or pick up the one that is <u>near</u> to him.

3. The parent should use the words "here" and "there" in their conversation with the child.
   "Our house is <u>here</u>, but the school is over <u>there</u>."

4. While going for a walk to the store or a ride in the car describe distance to the child.
   "We're going to the store <u>near</u> the church. Your friend Thomas lives <u>near</u> us but James lives <u>far away</u>."

Perception of Movement

An infant at an early age perceives the movement of objects and people around him. He soon learns that he can cause objects to move. Maturation in the perception of movement involves judgment of the speed and direction of moving objects. This is vital to the safety of the child.

1. The parent should allow the child to push a chair around the kitchen or other room with a smooth floor.

2. The parent or older sibling can play a game of rolling a ball to the child while sitting on the floor with legs extended. The child should try to pick up the ball while it is still rolling.

3. Walking to and from the store is a good opportunity for the parent to discuss the movement and speed of passing cars. A child must learn to judge when it is safe to cross the street.

4. The parent could ask the child when he thinks it is safe to cross a busy street. This gives the child the opportunity to have his perception checked immediately by the parent.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the topic of perceptual activities for preschool children under the headings of Classification, Perception of Shape, Perception of Color, Perception of Space, and Perception of Movement.

The activities can be utilized under the guidance of the parent, older sibling or any interested person. Although an activity was given for a specific skill development, it can be used in many creative ways limited only by the person who uses it.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The major purpose of this study was to review the findings of research and experimentation of the recent past with regard to the preschool disadvantaged child and reading readiness. The topics explored were the Disadvantaged Child, Parent as Educative Agent, and Perceptual Development.

The major findings indicate that the disadvantaged preschool child is retarded in academic readiness especially in the area of perceptual development. Current compensatory education seems to be inadequate in remedying this problem. In most instances the home as an educative agent has not been utilized to the full extent of its potential.

Perceptual activities for preschool children to be directed by parents were suggested. Involvement of the parent and home in the early education of children is mandatory if the educational discrepancy between the advantaged and disadvantaged pupil is to be rectified.

Implications

It is of importance that parents fulfill their role as the first educators of their children. The Perceptual Activities can be used as a simple guide for parents.

Although interest and concern for the educational success of their children are present in parents, the method to insure this success is not always known. Below are suggested ways the Perceptual Activities could be made known to parents.

1. Preschool child care could be a part of a high school curriculum in home economics. This would be especially applicable in the senior high school year.

2. Most inner city communities have prenatal clinics available for their members. Discussions of preschool child care could be conducted with emphasis on perceptual development. If possible, copies of the suggested activities for perceptual development could be disseminated to future parents.

3. Child development would be a topic of interest for discussion at a Parent-Teachers Association meeting. Most parents would appreciate suggested ways to help their preschool child to be successful when he attends school.

4. The Perceptual Activities could be utilized by Head Start teachers as part of a parental involvement program.

5. A local supermarket could have copies of the Perceptual Activities available to their shoppers as a courtesy.

6. Sections of the activities could comprise a small column in a neighborhood or school newspaper.

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